Ans. Dec. 4, 1854
C. H. M.

Ningpo May 16. 1854

To the Soc. of Inq. in the Theol. Sem. in Princeton

Dear Brethren

The letter written to me by Bro. Edmunds dated Oct 29. 1853 was waiting for me when I arrived in Shanghai March 14. 1854. I did not answer it immediately as I thought it's answer could not reach you till the next Session & that it would be desirable to become better acquainted with my field before writing — It is now but a little more than a year ago when the question upon which many of you are now anxiously deliberating, was urged upon my consideration & decided. I felt that it was one of the most solem & important questions which had ever engaged my attention. I can sympathize with you then while you are earnestly enquiring "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," & I would be most happy, were it in my power, to assist you in deciding this question. This however I will not attempt to do as I can give you no facts & considerations with which you are not already familiar — & as I feel that it must be answered by the great Head of the Church to whom Paul addressed it. I am confidently of the opinion that any individual who in the exercise of his best judgment, earnestly looks to God for direction, with the desire of going wherever duty calls, will be directed when he ought to go, & will not be troubled with misgivings & regrets. With regard to myself I may say that though I had at first a preference for the home field & took it for granted till a short time before my leaving the Sem. that

it was my duty to labor in it, & notwithstanding it was a very difficult matter for me to decide when to go. I have not since I determined to go abroad, I have never had the thought suggested to my mind that perhaps I might better have gone somewhere else, & it now seems to me that of all other places in the world this is the one for me to labor in. Try to gain large views of the greatness of the missionary field, the urgent need of laborers, and the encouraging hope of success which the missionary in any field enjoys — In coming to some just conception of the greatness of the foreign field some such particular considerations as the following may be useful to you. Within a distance of 10 miles from Ningpo there are probably as many as 30 villages in each of which a missionary could find enough work to occupy all his time & energies & hope to bring many souls to Christ. This district of which I have spoken is but a representative of the whole Chinese empire, & I have no doubt similar statements might be made with reference to most missionary fields. The whole number of missionaries there when considered with reference to the wants of the whole field appears but as a drop of the bucket. Their influence on account of its being diffused through so great a mass, works a gradual change & does not probably effect the immediate conversion of so many souls, as if missionaries confined their efforts to a smaller field. It is still probable that the course pursued will result in the greatest permanent good. Our missionaries have an meeting with much encouragement in their work & almost any communion there is an accession to the church from the heathen. Our little church now includes 16 native converts, which we hope are but the first fruits of a much richer harvest not far distant in the future —

I will occupy the rest of this sheet in giving you such particular information as is desirable for those expecting to make this the field of their future labors.

I think that when I was in the seminary opinions were common with reference to the difficulty of this language. With the present increased facilities for acquiring the language, derived from the experience of former missionaries & books lately printed, I do not think that the difficulty of the language should deter any one from coming here who has the ordinary qualifications for engaging in the ministry elsewhere. It is true that a knowledge of the character is very difficult to be acquired, but it is not very uncommon now for the local dialects to be acquired in six months sufficiently to preach in them, & there are not a few comparatively, in the field who now speak them as well as the natives. Men of different mental qualifications & habits are needed for different kinds of work, but the power to the natives in their local dialects is of prime importance to none & an ability to do this lies I think within the reach of every one.

I do not think the climate here is more unfavorable to good health than many parts of our own country. Merchants in China enjoy as good health, so far as I am able to learn as individuals of the same class do at home. I am disposed to think that the failure of the health of missionaries here is as a general thing due to the severity of their labors, rather than to the climate. Improvement in building houses & guarding against liabilities to disease which are peculiar to the climate, has given missionaries in China a reasonable hope of health in the prosecution of their labors which is I think not far below that possessed by ministers in our own country. Still it is evident that persons of weak constitutions

should rather chose the home field on account of the necessary expenditure of time & money required in coming out here.

I will add such information as would have been my useful to me had I possessed it, respecting articles necessary for living here. First with regard to clothing — The weather here is sometimes quite cold, sometimes very warm, & sometimes very damp. This will give a general idea of the kind of clothing necessary. Missionaries generally fail in bringing out enough warm winter clothing. The cold here is very trying & foreigners generally wear more & warmer clothes than in the coldest weather at home. Plenty of woolen under garments are very desirable. A warm carpet tho' though not absolutely necessary is very desirable when it can be procured — For wet weather it is necessary to have the best kind of shoes or boots to keep the feet dry. We have stone walks here almost everywhere so that what is particularly wanted is thick soles — In the summer we need the very thinest clothes. Pith hats are worn here to protect the head from the sun, which can usually be procured in Shanghai — One or two foreign umbrellas would be desirable Quite good summer clothes can be procured here cheaper than at home. Winter clothes should be brought out from home. A good supply of boots & shoes should also be brought from home. Cooking stoves are not used by any of our missions though they are always sent out by the Board. I believe they are generally used by the missionaries in Shanghai & we do not generally find it difficult to dispose of them. A person must consult his own tastes with regard to bringing a library. This is more. Nothing more if interest occurs to me. Hoping to hear from you again soon. Yours truly in Christ

John L. Nevius